Ethnologies

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Film Theory and Criticism. By Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, sixth edition. Pp. ix+937, ISBN 0-19-515817-2)

Julie M.-A. LeBlanc

Volume 29, numéro 1-2, 2007

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URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/018767ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/018767ar

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Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)
1708-0401 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

LeBlanc, J. M. (2007). Compte rendu de [*Film Theory and Criticism*. By Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, sixth edition. Pp. ix+937, ISBN 0-19-515817-2)]. *Ethnologies*, *29*(1-2), 380–383. https://doi.org/10.7202/018767ar

Film Theory and Criticism. By Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, sixth edition. Pp. ix+937, ISBN 0-19-515817-2)

This sixth edition compilation is a primer for film studies grouping key segments of film theory and criticism by fifty-seven contributors. In the Preface (xv-xviii) both editors, Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen discuss recurring questions in film theory and how film is unique in its "formal qualities… [its] need for enormous capital investment, and its relation to mass audience" (xv). This book gleans all phases of film theory and history from the 1916-1930s formalist period, to the 1960-1970s classical, to the beginning of the 1970s' systems of meaning phase, and the 1980s' postmodernist approaches (xv-xvi). There are in each overlapping phases various theoretical breakthroughs which include psychoanalysis, feminism, neocolonialism, and phenomenology (xvi).

As an overview, all chapters offer insightful analyses in film studies. In Chapter I "Film Language" (1-133) we learn about the progression of the Russian formalist period in film theory from Sergei M. Eisenstein (13-40) and Vsevolod Pudovkin (7-12) to the structuralist Christian Metz (65-86). We also learn about the iconic and mimetic cinematic coding as described by Stephen Price (87-105).

In Chapter II "Film and Reality" (135-282), we learn about Siegfried Kracauer's realism in cinema and the reproduction of life in film (143-165). André Bazin's perspective is also illustrated in his essay "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" (166-170) where he discusses the "obsession" of realism through photography and cinema. The image of a world or of Man is reproduced through a lens that conveys a realistic portrait of the subject. This marked "obsession" of realism by Bazin is, according to editors Braudy and Cohen, also shared by Jean Renoir, Orson Welles, and William Wyler. This could fit the docu-fiction and documentary styles of film and is still a very prominent form of expression and exposure of one's surrounding world. One could say that Bazin's interests mimic a visual ethnographer trying to reconstruct a setting, dependent on natural events and interactions amongst performers. In contrast to Bazin's neo-realistic vision of cinema, Rudolf Arnheim's reflections of cinema as art and self-sufficient form of reality (183-186) as well as Stan Brakhage's views of visual realism as illusionary (199-205) describe the intertextual meanings of visual codes, inborn signs and other influences affecting the film process. In other words, where some find it vital to recreate and promote natural settings in film to generate a sense of authenticity, others rely on artistic creativity and

argue that it is not possible to recreate a "natural" surrounding. The criticism and theoretical approaches are similar to that of folklore collecting and the fieldwork process since ethnographic work tries to capture "natural" life.

The theoretical perspectives of film as art and whether they should be viewed as separate are examined in Chapter III "The Film Medium: Image and Sound" (283-404). This section includes psychoanalytic theory especially surrounding the voice and the visual aesthetics of film. While Chapter IV's "Film Narratives and the Other Arts" (405-553) discusses the art of narrative through film, Chapter V's "The Film Artist" (55-656) talks about the creation of Hollywood as an "industrialized studio system" (555) after World War I. We learn about Andrew Sarris (561-564) and Peter Wollen's "auteur theory" (565-580), that is, the author's meaning in film, revealing his "style" and "basic motifs" (556). Sarris' own interpretation of "auteur theory" draws on works from Ian Cameron and the "cahiers" critics illustrating how and when a film is "auteur" and when the Director's meaning truly permeates through his/her films, or whether it is a combination of all artists involved in the final product (561-580). This is specifically explained when Sarris examines "the three premises of the auteur theory… the outer circle as technique; the middle circle, personal style; and the inner circle, interior meaning" (563). Ultimately, the product represents all who have contributed and the individual segments, or signs, which are studied as specific meanings. For those interested in performance studies, the articles by Gilberto Perez, "Keaton and Chaplin" (592-597), John Ellis, "Stars as a Cinematic Phenomenon" (598-605), and Robert C. Allen's "The Role of the Star in Film History [Joan Crawford]" (606-619), offer excerpts of performances by actors and filmmakers, as the portrayed and portrayers of narratives. Ellis's essay particularly draws on popular culture theory about the star image.

Stars have a similar function in the film industry in the creation of a "narrative image": they provide a foreknowledge of the fiction, an invitation to cinema. Stars are incomplete images outside the cinema: the performance of the film is the moment of completion of images in subsidiary circulation, in newspapers, fanzines, and so on. The star is at once ordinary and extraordinary, available for desire and unattainable. Further, the star's particular performance in a film is always more than the culmination of the star images in subsidiary circulation; it is a balancing act between fiction and cultism (598).

Gender studies and women's studies are also present in articles dealing with female stars (620-633) and female spectatorship (634-651).

In Chapter VI, "Film Genres" (657-782) the types of narratives are discussed and analyzed from the definition of a cinematic genre to sub-genres and combinations. We learn how classifying films may be categorical and heterogeneous. As noted in the introduction, "another problem of classifying fictional narrative films in this way arises when we ask if such categories have any impact on either the making of films or our responses to films" (658). The recognitions, representations, and conventions of genres are questioned. As explained by Leo Braudy in "Genre: The Conventions of Connection" (663-679):

> films in general have been criticized for their popular and commercial appeal, seemingly designed primarily for entertainment and escape rather than enlightenment. Genre films especially are criticized because they seem to appeal to a preexisting audience, while the film "classic" creates its own special audience through the unique power of the filmmaking artists' personal creative sensibility (663).

Semantic theories recur in this section, as well as feminist and psychoanalytic approaches such as Cynthia A. Freeland's "Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films" (742-763). Freeland's "framework" exposes the female characters and their context in the horror film genre, and "even when a film presents a problematic image of women, the audience reaction may subvert or undercut it" (762). Therefore the representation of women in this film genre is both subject to performance and audience interpretation.

Chapter VII's "Film, Psychology, Ideology, and Technology" (783-926) questions the nature and production of film through Marxist, ideological, and psychoanalytic lenses. The vulnerability of spectators, their perspective and (dis)association with the film image is analyzed as well as audience participation and its hypertextual possibilities when "spectators are 'users' with an 'interface'" (790) in the digital world. Due to technological advances constantly revolutionizing cinema, the very fabric of film is woven into a tapestry of events and interpretations.

In sum, this compilation is a great compendium for film theory and criticism. Compared with the discipline of folklore, film studies raises similar questions and concerns. Where there is performance and audience participation studied in film, there are similar issues that arise in folk performances and events. The concerns with recreated settings,

trying to capture a real or natural sense to a composed image and sound is as present in fieldwork when the ethnographer captures the life and times of his/her surroundings. In a sense, what can be learned from film studies can reflect a similar pattern in folklore and folkloristics. This compilation achieves its goal in illustrating and analyzing all possible facets in film studies through excerpts of larger works written by influential film theorists and critics. The reader will enjoy gleaning the intelligent and challenging debates highlighted in this collection.

Julie M.-A. LeBlanc
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland

Cows Don't Know It's Sunday: Agricultural Life in St. John's. By Hilda Chaulk Murray. (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 2002. Pp. 338, photographs, index, bibliography ISBN 0-919666-53-1)

This publication is a detailed account of the agricultural community which existed in and around St. John's in the first half of the twentieth century. As the author rightly points out, "much has been written in Newfoundland about fishing and the lives of outport people"; by comparison, the province's agricultural history has been sadly neglected (9).

Murray initiates her study with a brief account of the historical developments which prevented the growth of agriculture from flourishing in St. John's for several years (13-33). Farming was never an intuitive part of Great Britain's mandate for exploiting Newfoundland's resources. Like permanent settlement itself, agricultural activity was discouraged because it was viewed as being a deterrent to the fisheries. Despite such policies, by the late 1700s, to protect supplies and goods held over for the annual fisheries, some overwintering was necessary in the colony. This in turn led some settlers to establish kitchen gardens and to take up small scale animal husbandry. By the 1770s, some lands in and around St. John's had also been allocated mainly to certain military personnel (24). Although Newfoundland was always viewed as being "unsuitable for farming"(29), with the onset of the Napoleonic wars, the resident population of St. John's suffered great hardships because vessels were prevented from crossing the Atlantic with supplies (30).